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9 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
10 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

HRL

11 CV 14 00 68

12 LinkedIn Corporation,

13 Plaintiff,

14 vs.

15 Does, 1 through 10 inclusive,

16 Defendants.

Case No.

Complaint For:
(1) VIOLATION OF THE COMPUTER
FRAUD AND ABUSE ACT, 18 U.S.C.
§§ 1030 ET SEQ.;
(2) VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA
PENAL CODE § 502;
(3) VIOLATION OF THE DIGITAL
MILLENNIUM COPYRIGHT ACT, 17
U.S.C. §§ 1201 ET SEQ.;
(4) BREACH OF CONTRACT;
(5) TRESPASS; AND
(6) MISAPPROPRIATION

1 Plaintiff LinkedIn Corporation (“LinkedIn” or “Plaintiff”), by and through its attorneys,
2 brings this Complaint against Defendants Does 1-10 (collectively, the “Doe Defendants”) for
3 injunctive relief and damages. LinkedIn alleges as follows:

4 1. LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional network with more than 259 million
5 members in over 200 countries and territories around the globe. LinkedIn’s mission is to connect
6 the world’s professionals to make them more productive and successful. Through its proprietary
7 platform, LinkedIn allows its members to create, manage and share their professional histories and
8 interests online. In addition, LinkedIn provides valuable services to corporate recruiters and
9 headhunters with its Recruiter product, which allows them to identify among LinkedIn’s members
10 top candidates for open positions. At the heart of LinkedIn’s platform are its members, who create
11 profiles that serve as their professional online identities and are accessible by any other member.

12 2. Since May 2013, unknown persons and/or entities employing various automated
13 software programs (often referred to as “bots”) have registered thousands of fake LinkedIn
14 member accounts and have extracted and copied data from many member profile pages. This
15 practice, known as data “scraping,” is explicitly barred by LinkedIn’s User Agreement, which
16 prohibits access to LinkedIn “through scraping, spidering, crawling or other technology or
17 software used to access data without the express written consent of LinkedIn or its Members.”

18 3. The Doe Defendants knowingly and intentionally have breached this and other
19 access and use restrictions in LinkedIn’s User Agreement – which they agreed to abide by in
20 registering their accounts – and have circumvented various technical protection barriers employed
21 by LinkedIn. In so doing, they have violated an array of federal and state laws, including the
22 Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1030, et seq. (the “CFAA”), California Penal Code
23 § 502 et seq., and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 1201 et seq. (the “DMCA”),
24 and have engaged in unlawful acts of breach of contract, misappropriation, and trespass.

25 4. The Doe Defendants’ unlawful conduct threatens the LinkedIn platform in several
26 ways. It undermines the integrity and effectiveness of LinkedIn’s professional network by
27 polluting it with thousands of fake member profiles. The world’s professionals utilize LinkedIn
28 with the expectation that its contents are accurate and its user profiles legitimate. Moreover, by

1 pilfering data from the LinkedIn site, the Doe Defendants threaten to degrade the value of
2 LinkedIn's Recruiter product, in which LinkedIn has invested substantially over the years.
3 LinkedIn also has suffered additional harms as a result of the Doe Defendants' activities,
4 including, but not limited to, increased strain on and disruption of its network servers and the
5 expenditure of time and resources to investigate and respond to this misconduct.

6 5. LinkedIn's core guiding value is Members First. Because LinkedIn's members
7 entrust LinkedIn with their professional histories and interests on LinkedIn's site, LinkedIn is
8 committed to earning and keeping its members' trust in everything LinkedIn does, including
9 protecting its members from attempts by third parties to scrape their data.

10 6. LinkedIn responded swiftly to the Doe Defendants' activities, including promptly
11 disabling the fake member profiles and implementing additional technical protection barriers. In
12 addition to these measures, and to ensure that future incidents do not occur, LinkedIn brings this
13 action to identify the Doe Defendants and to obtain permanent injunctive relief halting their
14 unlawful conduct. The Doe Defendants' activities, if not enjoined, threaten ongoing and
15 irreparable harm to LinkedIn, including to its reputation and substantial consumer goodwill.
16 LinkedIn further is entitled to its actual damages, statutory damages, and/or exemplary damages as
17 a result of the Doe Defendants' misconduct.

18 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

19 7. This Court has federal question jurisdiction over this action under 28 U.S.C.
20 §§ 1331 and 1338 because this action alleges violations of federal statutes, including the CFAA,
21 18 U.S.C. § 1030, et seq., and the DMCA, 17 U.S.C. §§ 1201, et seq. The Court has supplemental
22 jurisdiction over the state law causes of action pleaded herein pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

23 8. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. § 1391, because a substantial part
24 of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in this District.

25 9. In addition, LinkedIn's User Agreement governing all users' access to and use of
26 the LinkedIn website and LinkedIn's services provides that courts located within the county of
27 Santa Clara, California, shall have jurisdiction over any dispute between LinkedIn and the Doe
28 Defendants.

1 productive and successful. LinkedIn's broader vision is to create economic opportunity for every
2 member of the global workforce.

3 16. At the heart of LinkedIn's platform are its members, who create individual profiles
4 that serve as their professional profiles and are accessible by any other member, as well as (unless
5 a member chooses otherwise) anyone with an Internet connection. LinkedIn counts executives
6 from all 2013 Fortune 500 companies as members.

7 17. LinkedIn's core guiding value is Members First. Because LinkedIn's members
8 entrust LinkedIn with their professional histories and interests on LinkedIn's site, LinkedIn is
9 committed to earning and keeping its members' trust in everything LinkedIn does, including
10 protecting its members from attempts by third parties to scrape their data.

11 18. The LinkedIn website is an original copyrighted work. Among the significant
12 original elements of the LinkedIn website are the distinctive page layout, design, graphical
13 elements, and organization of member profile pages and the LinkedIn homepage and news feed.
14 LinkedIn's U.S. copyright registrations for the LinkedIn website include Reg. Nos.
15 TX0007355749, TX0007030652, and TX0007455291.

16 19. LinkedIn has invested and plans to continue to invest substantial time, labor, skill,
17 and financial resources into the development and maintenance of the LinkedIn site.

18 **LinkedIn's User Agreement**

19 20. LinkedIn is available at no cost to anyone who wants to join and who agrees to the
20 terms of LinkedIn's User Agreement and Privacy Policy.¹ A prospective member registers for an
21 account by providing a first name, last name, email address, and password, and agreeing to
22 LinkedIn's User Agreement and Privacy Policy.

23 21. As described further below, the Doe Defendants registered thousands of fake
24 member accounts as part of their data scraping activities. For each of those accounts, the Doe
25 Defendants agreed to be bound by LinkedIn's User Agreement.

26
27 _____
28 ¹ See <http://www.linkedin.com/legal/user-agreement>.

1 27. Corporate recruiters and headhunters purchase LinkedIn Recruiter memberships in
2 order to search for prospective candidates among LinkedIn's hundreds of millions of member
3 profiles. By using LinkedIn Recruiter's robust and exclusive search tools, recruiters can search
4 the entire LinkedIn network for top candidates' names and profiles. Recruiters may locate and
5 contact members, including passive candidates who may not be looking for a job, by accessing
6 LinkedIn's professional network through LinkedIn Recruiter.

7 **LinkedIn's Technological Safeguards and Security Measures**
8 **To Protect LinkedIn Against Unauthorized Access**

9 28. LinkedIn fastidiously works to protect the integrity and security of its network and
10 systems. Among other things, it employs an array of technological safeguards and barriers
11 designed to prevent data scrapers and other wrongdoers from gaining unauthorized access to
12 LinkedIn's site.

13 29. One such safeguard is LinkedIn's FUSE program. FUSE imposes a limit on the
14 activity that an individual LinkedIn user may initiate on the site. This limit is intended to prevent
15 would-be data scrapers utilizing automated technologies from quickly accessing a substantial
16 volume of member profiles.

17 30. Similarly, LinkedIn's Sentinel program monitors and blocks suspicious activity
18 associated with particular Internet Protocol ("IP") addresses.²

19 31. LinkedIn also anticipated that data scrapers might attempt to create a multitude of
20 fake member accounts. Accordingly, as a secondary layer of protection, LinkedIn implemented its
21 UCV system to thwart this misconduct. The UCV system uses a number of parameters to
22 determine if a new account signup is suspicious. If a suspicious signup is identified, the UCV
23 system imposes barriers intended to separate legitimate prospective members from automated data
24 scraping programs and bots. Specifically, the UCV system introduces a CAPTCHA³ field that
25 requires prospective members to re-type a word or text that appears in obscured, colored type.

26 _____
27 ² An IP address in this context is a numerical label assigned to each access point to the Internet.

28 ³ CAPTCHA is an acronym for "Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart."

1 These obscured words or text are legible to a real person – and familiar to those purchasing
2 concert tickets, for instance, as a common step in an online registration process – but difficult for
3 an automated program or bot to recognize. By using CAPTCHAs, the UCV system prevents data
4 scrapers from automatically registering many new and illegitimate member accounts.

5 32. LinkedIn also employs technical protocols designed to prevent unauthorized
6 automated bots and web crawlers from accessing otherwise publicly available parts of the LinkedIn
7 site. Known as a robots.txt file, this safeguard provides a set of instructions to any automated
8 technologies visiting the LinkedIn site. While LinkedIn’s robots.txt file does permit some
9 web crawlers (e.g., search engines such as Google or Bing) to view the entire site, it prohibits and
10 is intended to prevent automated programs like those used by data scrapers.

11 **The Doe Defendants’ Data Scraping Activities**

12 33. Between May 2013 and the present, the Doe Defendants knowingly and
13 intentionally circumvented FUSE, Sentinel, the UCV system, the robots.txt protocol and/or other
14 LinkedIn security measures in order to engage in their data scraping activities.

15 34. During this time period, the Doe Defendants created thousands of member accounts
16 (with fake names and contact information) to access and scrape data from many LinkedIn member
17 profiles.

18 35. In order to create each and every one of these fake member accounts, the Doe
19 Defendants had to agree to abide by the access and use restrictions in LinkedIn’s User Agreement,
20 which, *inter alia*, prohibit “scraping, spidering, crawling or other technology or software used to
21 access data without the express written consent of LinkedIn or its Members,” and require that
22 members “will only maintain one LinkedIn account at any given time” and “will use [their] real
23 name and only provide accurate information to LinkedIn.” The Doe Defendants knowingly
24 violated each of these access and use restrictions in engaging in their unlawful conduct.

25 36. In May and June 2013, the Doe Defendants circumvented FUSE – which limits the
26 volume of activity for each individual account – by creating thousands of different new member
27 accounts through the use of various automated technologies. Registering so many unique new
28 accounts allowed the Doe Defendants to view hundreds of thousands of member profiles per day.

1 37. At the same time, the Doe Defendants also circumvented the UCV system by using
2 automated technologies to register thousands of fake member accounts without triggering the
3 UCV system's imposition of CAPTCHAs. The Doe Defendants also circumvented and bypassed
4 LinkedIn's robots.txt file, which specifically bans and is intended to prevent the use of
5 unauthorized automated data scraping programs and bots.

6 38. In early September 2013, the Doe Defendants again accessed LinkedIn's website
7 and engaged in data scraping through the use of automated data scraping programs. In so doing,
8 the Doe Defendants circumvented LinkedIn's Sentinel program, which limits the number of
9 successive requests made by an IP address or set of IP addresses. They also circumvented the
10 prohibitions set forth in LinkedIn's robots.txt file.

11 39. LinkedIn initially identified the Doe Defendants' misconduct when it observed that
12 thousands of fake member accounts had collectively viewed many member profiles in a short
13 period of time. LinkedIn determined that the user accounts were fake after close inspection of
14 account details revealed clear patterns of automation. LinkedIn observed that the automated bots
15 that were running these fake accounts would use each account to view a small number of profiles,
16 thereby bypassing and circumventing FUSE's page view restrictions, and then would move on to
17 the next registered account to view additional profiles.

18 40. LinkedIn conducted an extensive investigation of the Doe Defendants' misconduct.
19 In the course of its investigation, it compiled spreadsheets tracking the IP addresses used by the
20 Doe Defendants. LinkedIn also identified and cataloged the Doe Defendants' fake member
21 profiles, the number of legitimate profiles viewed by each fake member, and the dates and times of
22 the Doe Defendants' activity on the LinkedIn website. LinkedIn disabled the fake member
23 profiles and implemented additional technological safeguards to protect against unauthorized
24 access to the LinkedIn site.

25 41. As a result of this investigation, LinkedIn determined that the Doe Defendants
26 accessed LinkedIn using a cloud computing platform offered by Amazon Web Services ("AWS").
27 This platform – called Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud or Amazon EC2 – allows users like the
28 Doe Defendants to rent virtual computers on which to run their own computer programs and

1 applications. Amazon EC2 provides resizable computing capacity. This feature allows users to
2 quickly scale capacity, both up and down. Amazon EC2 users may temporarily run hundreds or
3 thousands of virtual computing machines. The Doe Defendants used Amazon EC2 to create
4 virtual machines to run automated bots to scrape data from LinkedIn's website.

5 42. As a result of Doe Defendants' use of Amazon EC2, LinkedIn expects to be able to
6 identify the Doe Defendants by serving third-party discovery on AWS.⁴ LinkedIn intends to file
7 motions to expedite these discovery requests.

8 **Doe Defendants Have Caused and Threaten Ongoing and Irreparable Injury to LinkedIn**

9 43. By engaging in the data scraping incidents described above, the Doe Defendants
10 have caused, and if not halted will continue to cause, ongoing and irreparable harm to LinkedIn, in
11 a variety of ways.

12 44. The thousands of fake member profiles created by the Doe Defendants disrupt and
13 degrade LinkedIn's site and services by reducing the accuracy and integrity of the information the
14 site contains. LinkedIn's members expect the site to contain accurate and legitimate professional
15 profiles – not useless fictions crafted by data scrapers.

16 45. The presence of fake member profiles also impairs legitimate members' ability to
17 identify valid professional contacts. In particular, because LinkedIn enables its members to view
18 which users have viewed their profiles, legitimate LinkedIn users whose profiles have been
19 viewed by a Doe Defendant using a fake account may be confused or misled when they see that an
20 unknown, fake member has viewed their profiles. Indeed, LinkedIn observed some of its valid
21 members attempting to connect with these fake member profiles after noticing that the fake
22 accounts had viewed their profiles.

23 46. This type of pollution to the LinkedIn network, if not halted, threatens ongoing and
24 irreparable harm to the integrity of the LinkedIn platform and LinkedIn's reputation. LinkedIn

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26 ⁴ See [http://portal.aws.amazon.com/gp/aws/html-forms-](http://portal.aws.amazon.com/gp/aws/html-forms-controller/contactus/AWSAbuse#subpoenas)
27 [controller/contactus/AWSAbuse#subpoenas](http://portal.aws.amazon.com/gp/aws/html-forms-controller/contactus/AWSAbuse#subpoenas) (detailing procedures for serving third-party
28 discovery on Amazon to obtain information relating to "suspected abuse of Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (Amazon EC2)").

1 also will suffer ongoing and irreparable harm to the value of its consumer goodwill and trust,
2 which LinkedIn has worked hard for years to earn and maintain, if the Doe Defendants' conduct
3 continues.

4 47. Further, by pilfering member data from the LinkedIn site, the Doe Defendants
5 misconduct threatens to degrade the value of LinkedIn's Recruiter product, which LinkedIn has
6 invested substantially in over the years. On information and belief, the Doe Defendants, who have
7 invested none of their own time and resources into developing and building the LinkedIn platform,
8 have engaged in their scraping activities in an attempt to establish competing recruiting websites
9 and usurp LinkedIn's Recruiter product.

10 48. The Doe Defendants' misconduct also has imposed significant strains on
11 LinkedIn's servers, including through the use of automated technologies to view many member
12 profiles. The Doe Defendants' illegitimate profile views impaired LinkedIn's ability to dedicate
13 its servers to supporting the activities of legitimate LinkedIn members.

14 49. LinkedIn has suffered harm to its computer systems, and has expended significant
15 human, financial, and technological resources, including hundreds of hours of employee time,
16 investigating and responding to the Doe Defendants' unlawful activities, at a cost to LinkedIn of
17 more than \$5,000.

18 FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF

19 **Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, 18 U.S.C. §1030 et seq.**

20 50. LinkedIn realleges and incorporates by reference all of the preceding paragraphs.

21 51. LinkedIn's computers and servers are involved in interstate and foreign commerce
22 and communication, and are protected computers under 18 U.S.C. §1030(e)(2).

23 52. On information and belief, the Doe Defendants knowingly and intentionally
24 accessed LinkedIn's computers and servers without authorization or in excess of the authorization
25 permitted under LinkedIn's User Agreement and in circumvention of various technical barriers –
26 including FUSE, Sentinel, the UCV system, the robots.txt protocol, and additional safeguards –
27 LinkedIn has employed to protect LinkedIn's computers and servers from unauthorized access.

28

1 networks, including to wrongfully control such data, in violation of Cal. Penal Code § 502(c)(1)
2 &(2).

3 61. The Doe Defendants knowingly, fraudulently, and without permission disrupted or
4 caused the disruption of LinkedIn's computer services to authorized users of LinkedIn's
5 computers, computer systems, and/or computer networks in violation of Cal. Penal Code
6 § 502(c)(5).

7 62. As a direct and proximate result of the Doe Defendants' unlawful conduct, the Doe
8 Defendants have caused damage to LinkedIn in an amount to be proven at trial. LinkedIn is also
9 entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to California Penal Code §502(c).

10 63. LinkedIn believes that the Doe Defendants' acts were willful and malicious in that
11 Defendants' acts described above were done with the deliberate intent to improve the Doe
12 Defendants' business at LinkedIn's expense. LinkedIn is therefore entitled to punitive damages.

13 64. In addition, LinkedIn has suffered and will continue to suffer irreparable harm, and
14 its remedy at law is not itself adequate to compensate it for injuries inflicted by the Doe
15 Defendants. Accordingly, LinkedIn is entitled to injunctive relief.

16 **THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

17 **Violations of The Digital Millennium Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 1201 et seq.**

18 65. LinkedIn realleges and incorporates by reference all of the preceding paragraphs.

19 66. LinkedIn employs various layers of technological protections – including FUSE,
20 Sentinel, the UCV system, the robots.txt protocol, and additional safeguards – to protect
21 LinkedIn's computers and servers from unauthorized access. These technological protection
22 measures effectively control access to the copyrighted materials on LinkedIn's servers, including
23 the LinkedIn website, member profile pages, and the LinkedIn homepage and news feed, and
24 protect LinkedIn's exclusive rights in these copyrighted materials.

25 67. Despite LinkedIn's best efforts to protect the LinkedIn site from the Doe
26 Defendants' unauthorized access, the Doe Defendants circumvented LinkedIn's technological
27 safeguards – including FUSE, Sentinel, the UCV system, the robots.txt protocol, and additional
28

1 safeguards – and gained unauthorized access to LinkedIn’s copyrighted materials, including
2 without limitation the copyrighted LinkedIn website, in violation of 17 U.S.C. § 1201(a).

3 68. As a result of the Doe Defendants’ wrongful acts, LinkedIn has suffered, is
4 continuing to suffer, and will continue to suffer damages to be proven at trial. LinkedIn is further
5 entitled to all profits attributable to the Doe Defendants’ wrongful acts to be proven at trial.
6 Alternatively, upon its election at any time before final judgment is entered, LinkedIn is entitled to
7 recover statutory damages from the Doe Defendants pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203 for each act of
8 circumvention committed by the Doe Defendants.

9 69. The Doe Defendants’ circumventions also have caused LinkedIn irreparable harm.
10 Unless restrained and enjoined, the Doe Defendants will continue to commit such acts.
11 LinkedIn’s remedies at law are not adequate to compensate it for these inflicted and threatened
12 injuries, and thus LinkedIn is entitled to injunctive relief as provided by 17 U.S.C. § 1203.

13 **FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

14 **Breach of Contract**

15 70. LinkedIn realleges and incorporates by reference all of the preceding paragraphs.

16 71. Use of the LinkedIn website and use of LinkedIn services are governed by and
17 subject to the User Agreement.

18 72. LinkedIn members are presented with the User Agreement and must affirmatively
19 accept the User Agreement to register for a LinkedIn account.

20 73. At all relevant times, LinkedIn also prominently displayed a link to the User
21 Agreement on LinkedIn’s homepage.

22 74. The Doe Defendants accessed the LinkedIn website and affirmatively accepted and
23 agreed to the User Agreement to, among other things, create the fake member profiles that enabled
24 the Doe Defendants to access LinkedIn user profiles and scrape data from LinkedIn’s website.

25 75. The User Agreement is enforceable and binding on the Doe Defendants.

26 76. The Doe Defendants repeatedly accessed the LinkedIn website with knowledge of
27 the User Agreement and all of its prohibitions. Despite their knowledge of the User Agreement
28 and its prohibitions, the Doe Defendants accessed and continue to access the LinkedIn website to,

1 among other things, scrape, crawl, or use other automated technology or software to gain access to
2 the LinkedIn website without the consent of LinkedIn. Moreover, the Doe Defendants maintained
3 more than one account (indeed, thousands of accounts) at any given time, and did not provide their
4 real names or provide accurate information to LinkedIn.

5 77. LinkedIn has been unable to contact the Doe Defendants to demand that they cease
6 and desist their data scraping and other LinkedIn-related activities because LinkedIn does not
7 know the identifies of the Doe Defendants.

8 78. The Doe Defendants' actions, as described above, have willfully, repeatedly, and
9 systematically breached the User Agreement.

10 79. LinkedIn has performed all conditions, covenants, and promises required of it in
11 accordance with the User Agreement.

12 80. The Doe Defendants' conduct has damaged LinkedIn, and caused and continues to
13 cause irreparable and incalculable harm and injury to LinkedIn.

14 81. LinkedIn is entitled to injunctive relief, compensatory damages, and/or other
15 equitable relief.

16 FIFTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF

17 **Trespass**

18 82. LinkedIn realleges and incorporates by reference all of the preceding paragraphs.

19 83. The Doe Defendants intentionally, and without authorization, accessed and
20 interacted with LinkedIn, including without limitation, LinkedIn's website, computer systems and
21 servers.

22 84. The Doe Defendants' access to LinkedIn and the information contained therein
23 required the Doe Defendants to abide by the User Agreement. By violating the terms of the User
24 Agreement, and LinkedIn's express efforts to combat their activities, the Doe Defendants
25 unlawfully gained access to and interfered and intermeddled with LinkedIn, its website, computer
26 systems, and its servers.

